DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 555 CS 205 159

AUTHOR	Martin, Nancy; And Others
TITLE	Why Write?
INSTITUTION	London Univ. (England). Inst. of Education.; Schools Council, London (England).
PUB DATE	73
NOTE	31p.; For related documents, see CS 205 154-161
AVAILABLE FROM	Export Department, Ward Lock Educational, 116 Baker St., London W1M 2BB, England ($10.00 plus $1.00 postage, for entire set; individual copies are not available)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Communication (Thought Transfer); *Composition (Literary); Foreign Countries; Language Usage; Learning Theories; Secondary Education; *Teaching Techniques; *Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	*Composition Process; England; *Writing Across the Curriculum Project (England)

ABSTRACT

This is one in a series of eight discussion pamphlets produced by the Writing Across the Curriculum Project dealing with some of the issues connected with writing in the schools and their relation to learning. This pamphlet contains five papers that are concerned with the ways in which writing changes under the influence of who it is for and what it is doing. The papers present descriptions of the major kinds of writing and offer illustrations of the ways they have been used by children in their early secondary school years. (PL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

THE SCHOOLS COUNCIL AND LONDON UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
JOINT PROJECT: WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM 11–13 YEARS

Nancy Martin Peter Medway Harold Smith Pat D'Arcy

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

WHY

ED177555

CS205159

a collection of papers about writing in schools: what it's doing and who it's for

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ward Lock Educational

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

WRITE?

Published by the Project: Writing across the Curriculum: Schools Council/London University Institute of Education

First edition October 1973

©1973 the Project Team
Permission to reproduce will normally be given on request

Contents

Introducing the Project 1

Paper 1 A Sense of Audience: The Child and His Reader 3

Paper 2 Functions of Writing 10

Paper 3 Genuine Communication 15

Paper 4 Single Situations Not Kinds of Writing 18

Paper 5 Growth from the Expressive 21

To Sum Up: We Believe . . . 26

Some Relevant Books 28

Acknowledgements:–
To the pupils and staff of the following schools–our thanks for all their help: Chelsea School, London; Countesthorpe College, Leicestershire; Crown Woods School, London; Mount Grace High School, Hinckley; St Paul's Secondary School, Bessbrook, Northern Ireland.

Price:–
20p each post free. Ten or more copies: 12p each post free
Please enclose payment with orders

Obtainable from:–
Export Department, Ward Lock Educational,
116 Baker St., London, W1M 2BB, England.

Introducing the Project

Three Teachers, a Programme and a Theory

This Project started in September 1971 with a team of three teachers and a theory of writing based on an earlier five year research programme–The Development of Writing Abilities 11-18 years.

Since then, with the help of teachers in our 'experimental' schools, and others who became interested, we have collected together pieces of writing drawn from history, geography and English lessons, integrated studies, science and design courses–from right across the curriculum in fact. These writings reflect in many different ways how children in the 11-13 age range can be encouraged to write in contexts which are meaningful to them and more closely linked, we believe, to their educational development than the kind of writing which is still often found in schools, sometimes in the form of exercises, note-taking (rather than note-*making*), or just copying from board or book.

The two Project Officers work directly in a few schools: these, and any other schools where teachers are interested, send us source material which we work on to produce the 'Associated Schools Packs' which we send out at regular intervals to all teachers co-operating or interested in the Project. These source materials consist of examples of writing by children with comments or questions from teachers which we, in turn, comment on in the light of the research findings. Each 'Pack' consists of half a dozen or so of such papers embodying particular problems of writing as seen by particular teachers, theoretical ideas from the research, and examples of children's writing.

In addition to the Packs, we produce from time to time printed discussion pamphlets. This collection of papers forms our second discussion pamphlet. We see these printed or duplicated outcomes of the Project as a dialogue between teachers about

writing in school.

The Theory

The theory provides a model which does not simply *list* the different kinds of writing but makes clear the relationships between them; it has specific things to say about the development of writing abilities, about what comes before what, and why; it relates the different sorts of writing to the mental processes (learning, creativity, reasoning etc) which the teacher is concerned to foster; it provides a basis for a consistent approach to language in all parts of the curriculum, in particular giving the 'English' component an intelligible place in the whole rather than treating it as if it were an entirely different species.

As teachers we are interested not in the development of writers as writers, but in writing as a means of development—cognitive, affective and social. That writing may be such a means is due to the nature of its two faces: on the one hand it looks to other people and seeks to transfer something to them by way of informing, advising, commanding, persuading and sharing; on the other, it can also organise more clearly for the writer himself whatever perceptions he has about the world he lives in and his own relation to it. Using this second face enables him to select and hold for closer contemplation aspects of his own experience which can be scanned for particular features—sorted into logical or chronological order, rearranged for his own satisfaction, invested with particular feelings and so on. This process of personal selection, contemplation and differentiation is very important, because it *changes the writer*, he is a different person when he has done it, because now he has articulated a feeling or a thought or an attitude more clearly, or seen how a bit of his experience fits into the pattern which he is gradually building up for himself; in other words, he is more conscious than he was. It is these processes which can go on in writing which can make it so powerful in an educational sense.

But in encouraging them to happen we must also take into account the other face of the writer which seeks an audience

outside himself, because most voluntary writing is motivated by this sense of communication.

About this Pamphlet

So these papers are concerned with the ways in which writing changes under the influence of who it is for and what it is doing. We have attempted to describe the major kinds of writing and to illustrate the way some children have used them in their early years in the secondary school. Because we have tried to catch learning on the wing, as it were, some of the examples may, at first sight, seem alarmingly imperfect: we hope readers will understand that these examples are not seen as models of good writing but as an attempt to document children's writing in transition as part of a *learning process*.

Because we now know that many teachers associated with the Project have found this theory useful in a variety of situations across the whole curriculum, we have put together in this pamphlet new versions of the theoretical papers which they originally received, revised to include examples of some of the kinds of writing which came from schools where the teachers were familiar with our theory. We hope that in this form it will be useful to both primary and secondary teachers whatever their particular 'subject' interests happen to be.

1 A Sense of Audience: The Child and his Reader

A sense of audience—how the writer pictures his reader—although very obviously important when we consider the range of

adult writing, may not at first sight seem so relevant to school writing since almost all of it is produced for one sort of reader—the teacher. But in fact the notion of Audience has powerful implications for school writing and in this section we try briefly to explain why.

It is true that children in school write mostly for the teacher. But what makes for differences between the pieces of writing is not, objectively, who the reader is, but how the writer *sees* his reader; and children see their teachers in very different ways. Not only may different children's views of the same teacher vary, but a child may see his teacher as a different sort of reader on different occasions.

In differentiating the sorts of 'Sense of Audience' that we find in school writing, we have found these categories (which the earlier Writing Research team formulated) very useful:

Child (or adolescent) to Self
Child (or adolescent) to Trusted Adult
Pupil to Teacher as Partner in Dialogue
Pupil to Teacher, Particular Relationship
Pupil to Teacher seen as Examiner or Assessor
Writer to his Readers (or his Public)

'Child to Self' writing is writing which takes no account of the needs of a reader other than oneself—as in some diaries, notes and first drafts. By contrast, writing for a Public Audience is capable of being read and understood by a complete stranger, so most published writing comes in this category, as does some school writing (particularly stories) by older students.

Writing for a teacher could come under any of the middle four categories. In 'Child to Trusted Adult', a personal relationship seems more relevant than the pedagogic one, and the writing occurs because there is this particular person who will respond sympathetically; so the child may write about personal or deeply felt matters such as he would not venture upon if he did not feel very secure with his reader. 'Pupil to Teacher as Partner in Dialogue' covers writing which is recognisably part of an educational process: the child still feels secure in the teacher's presence and is assuming that the teacher is there to help him and will be

interested in what he is saying. Where there is a 'Particular Relationship' with a particular teacher, the child may risk being honest, tentative and frank as in the 'Child to Trusted Adult' situation, the only difference being that the subject matter relates specifically to the *educational* setting, rather than, for instance, to the child's family life. It is comparable with an 'apprentice to master' relationship. 'Pupil to Teacher seen as Examiner or Assessor' refers not only to exams but to all writing which the child appears to be producing merely to satisfy a teacher's demand and on which he is expecting to be judged or assessed—either for how well he has written or for what he has shown he knows.

Far from being confined to examinations and formal tests, writing for the 'Examiner' audience accounted, in a 1966 sample from 65 secondary schools, for about half of all school writing. Even in the first year it was 40%.*

In other words, in schools—institutes of learning—the single most important use for writing appears to be as a means of testing, of monitoring knowledge and performance. This writing is seen not as *part* of the learning process but as something which happens *after* the learning.

In the belief that writing could actually be part of learning, and in particular could be an important means whereby children might get into new fields and unfamiliar ideas and begin to understand them, we have been working with teachers on ways of making writing into something children feel they can *use*. We felt strongly that the 'Examiner audience' situation inhibited thinking and speculation and that the child needed what he wrote to be read with interest and sympathy rather than to be judged as the performance of a task.

The writing which follows resulted from situations in which teachers were willing to accept and even to encourage a 'Trusted Adult' situation in which the writer felt free to 'come out' with his thoughts in writing as he might more often do in speech.

* Preliminary findings from the Schools Council Project: The Development of the Written Language of 11-18 year olds. (To be published)

Writing (A) resulted from an experimental approach by one teacher along these lines. The subject was Social Studies, the school a multi-racial boys' comprehensive and the course was a new one. The teacher asked the boys to keep a log in which they could say anything they wanted to say about the work. He decided before they started that his response would be that of a partner in the same enterprise: he *was* an adult and a teacher, and this would be acknowledged, but he would not mark or evaluate the logs, instead he would write back.

(A) LM 6.9.72

I don't like being told what to do, I like doing things what I like doing not what others want me to do. I am not interest in any other lessons, I don't thing my mum and dad were very interest in lessons at school. I don't thing about leaving school, I feel that the day I leave school in two years time seems a long way a way, but looking on the last two years it has gone very quick, two quick not to thing about leaving. I moan to much to my sisters and my mates sometimes I even moan to my mum and dad. I am a shy person with my relatives but not with my mates. I say things with my mates, but not to my relatives, and my relatives are not what you call angels, more comes out when I talk to somebody who's not my relative.

Teacher 12.9.72

You have made a very good explanation of the kind of person you are. When you have examined what the development of man has been like, perhaps you will understand yourself better.

Most people of your age go through the confusion you have described. It is important that you are aware of yourself because it will help you leave these doubts and confusions behind.

Although it is right to be independent and only do what you want you should remember you can learn a lot from other people and by reading, studying and thinking.

You should start your work on prehistory as soon as possible.

LM 13.9.72

Today I wrote about the Erect-man. When I first started I wasn't interested. When I started getting invold with writing about it, I began to enjoy doing writing the Erect-man.

Teacher 18.9.72

Write in your log book how much you understood about the development of your own body by studying Homo erectus. Always write your personal reaction to what you are finding out. You have made a good start.

Would you mind also explaining in the log what brought on your bad mood yesterday, why you left early, why you were stroppy, what you think of the group and what you think about our new school Council representative.

LM undated

Yesterday when I came into the group in a bad mood was because I was fed up with school that day. When I get fed up, I always get in a bad temper and then I swear to much. Then people get a bad impression of me. The group is alright and should be alright. But I think it should have been Nobby D-- doing our group reproestive again this year.

SL 6.9.72

Today I we not sure of what to do or what some of the things meant I didn't know what things like civilisation meant. Then I got bored and started larking because all in all it wasn't an exactly working day.

Teacher 12.9.72

Understanding what civilisation means will come to you as the course goes along. In the meantime look it up in the dictionary.

'Getting bored' means losing your concentration. Concentraion is making an effort to think.

SL 13.9.72

I really think you are right when you said I don't understood about civilisation because I don't but I'm sure it'll come to me as you said I was bored because I wasn't interested in the work it wasn't interested I didn't understand. I will read think about it until I understand it then I'll write.

SL 13.9.72

Today I think I learned a little bit about prehistory today I learned about the Handy Man. I learned about Dr Leakey who probably lived with ape men I liked today's lesson But I don't think I done enough for four lessons I spent a long time reading thats probably why

Teacher 13.9.72

You haven't done much as you said but your explanation in your log book was excellent.

SL undated

This was probably my best day of all I understood it all and got through more work than any other lesson.

Writing (B) happened because the teacher suggested that two boys might like to act as reporters about an experimental situation in woodwork. Instead of each boy concentrating on his own product the woodwork area was turned into a 'factory' for the day and all the work was organised like an assembly line. Although the full account is in print elsewhere we have chosen to use the opening two paragraphs from Francis's account here, because it seems to us to demonstrate very clearly the freedom of expression which can occur when the teacher is in a 'Trusted Adult' rather than a more teacher-like role—though, in this case, there was also the influence of an audience of other children since Francis's report was intended to be presented to his own class. The knowledge that an audience will be a peer-group can powerfully affect the way children write. After all, they *know* what this audience will be interested in.

(B) *Report by Francis Cleary*

(Class) S.1.C and S.1.E today are making tables for the old people which is a very good cause: Another thing about this work is that it is all
series volinteerly. There is a serrious of jobs for different people. This room is termendosly changed, in the way that there is no time for talking all
serious searosery work. Ordinary days is nowhere near in this room today. People comes from room to room as they please. The people has not spiritly changed but mently changed. The lasy people are bissy and bissy people are bissyer still. Mister Comer is changed a lot in no bad way ither. Any other day it would be do what you are told to do and no wandrowing about. Today it is do as you please, wander as you please as long as it has to do with the job. People is exchanging jobs which is unusall for this room espically when Mister Comer is in it.
complicated all this work is complated but it is a break for all the boys the break is to sho:. what kind of a worker he is. In this room there are some very good workers like Paddy McDonald, Antony Teggart and Patsy Doran. Then there are some poor workers like Tomas McMegoire who is just not trying his best.

Having changed rooms I can see that room or rather the people are working very differently. Different jobs again are done by different people. The jobs in this room is not as difficult as the jobs in the other room. The teacher again is changed from ordinary in the way that he is not as bosey althought he is bosey a little. I think looking and listing to bouth teachers I think I would rather have Mister Comer in a lot of ways. About five yards away from where I am the first table is almost finished and from this I can say that it is going to be very nice and
observer so does my other fellow observe that is along with me he also thinks that it is a little shakie

but I disagree with him there in every way posible about this table anyway. Laim McCul-
boys lough is the fourman and is over all the boy involved in this job. I think that he should not have been foorman in fact he should not have been included in the job because he does not work this might be because he thinks he is the
bossing big man when he is fourman an bousing the boys about which he does not do. Some people showes that they do not like Laim by calling him, slave-driver and big head and say that they would like to kill him and through him out the window. I do not like Laim becaus when I asked him some questions he was not very
cooperative (coropited) coriprable and because he will not help the people he does not like but he is allways helping the people he likes very well.

2 Functions of Writing

In Paper 1 we looked at the effect on a writer of who he is writing for. In this Paper we shall be looking at another major influence on a writer—his sense of *what* it is for. This is not exactly the same as his purpose because our culture has itself developed distinct language forms which are typically associated with certain situations. We know quite well, for instance, when we are in a story, or a sermon, or being persuaded to buy something—because we have internalised these kinds of language from our day-to-day encounters with them. When children come to write in similar situations they draw on their pool of language experience which helps them to know what kind of language to use in certain types of situation. For instance, no-one teaches children in an infant class to begin their stories 'Once upon a time', or 'Once there was a little pig . . .' but most of them do this because this beginning

is so obviously a 'marker' of stories which they have listened to or read.

The boundaries are by no means hard and fast but it has been found possible and useful to distinguish three broad categories of function to which recognisably distinct kinds of writing belong. What distinguishes them is that writer and reader mutually recognise the conventions that distinguish one 'job' from another. It is true that there are often linguistic differences but these are the markers of the different functions whose essential difference lies in the sort of things the writer takes for granted about his reader's responses. To take a simple example, if we read 'Once upon a time there was a flying horse' we know the writer is taking it for granted that we recognise a story and shall not quarrel about whether horses can fly.

The three 'recognised and allowed for' functions of writing which can be distinguished in the language are these:–

Expressive: *in which it is taken for granted* that the writer himself is of interest to the reader; he feels free to jump from facts to speculations to personal anecdote to emotional outburst and none of it will be taken down and used against him–it is all part of being a person vis à vis another person. It is the means by which the new is tentatively explored, thoughts may be half-uttered, attitudes half-expressed, the rest being left to be picked up by a listener or reader who is willing to take the unexpressed on trust.

The following excerpt from a long account of a project in metal-work by a boy of twelve illustrates many of the features of expressive writing.

> *The becoming of gnat killer*
>
> the name Gnat Killer came to me after the project for maths I had been doing, you see I was going to do a project to see how many people spelt Gnat rong they ither spell it Kat, Gnate, Knate, Knatte, and even Knatt. well when I started to do my project, I thought well I will call it the Gnat then Killer came into my mind because I am mad on Horror. So I called it the Gnat Killer, it may sound violent but it isn't well at least I don't think, it is only another name been

created to the world for the perpose of a project, I dont thoe if my turnin two the dictionary, it will read

Gnat Killer
name for
a dagger used
by Ricky Baker
in 1972 8th dec:
(not spelt nat killer)
in italics:

that is only my idear thoe not that it will work.

Clearly this writing is very like written down speech, reflecting the ebb and flow of the writer's thoughts and feelings—and this is what expressive language (spoken or written) does. But speech is always on the move: it moves according to the demands of what it is for, what the listener wants to hear, and how the speaker's language resources allow him to meet these demands—his own and other people's. So expressive speech shuttles to and fro in opposite directions, and expressive writing can be seen to move in a similar way, either towards the *Transactional* or towards the *Poetic*.

Transactional: *in which it is taken for granted* that the writer means what he says and can be challenged for its truthfulness to public knowledge, and its logicality; that it claims to be able to stand on its own and does not derive its validity from coming from a particular person. So it is the typical language of science and of intellectual inquiry, of technology, of trade, of planning, reporting, instructing, informing, advising, persuading, arguing and theorising—and, of course, the language most used in school writing.

Ian was in the same metal-work class as Ricky. His project was a brass dish and he wrote a long piece about brass and how you work it and how he made his dish; but, although there are many expressive features in his writing, his purpose is firmly transactional. He feels himself to be knowledgeable about brass and sets out to *inform* his readers. The differences between his piece and Ricky's (quoted above) illustrate the differences between writing that is focussed on a transaction and writing following the free flow of the writer's thoughts and feelings.

About Brass

Brass is an yellow alloy of copper and zinc in varying proprotions with quantities of lead tin and iron brass is very malleable, fusible ductile and readilly cast and machined, Muntz or yellow metal is a variety of brass containing 60% copper, As it resists corrosion well, it is largely used for ship propellors, bows and fittings, corrosion means rusting away.

Some examples of what brass can make:

1) electrical fixtures
2) unexpensive jewelry
3) metal decorations
4) table lighter
5) trombone
6) screws
7) marine hardware

A percentage table

copper	60%
brass	37%
white alloy	3%
	100%

In the famous Praha football stadium, nearly everything in side the walls are made out of copper including the goalpost, the team that play here are Sparta Prague. Mallable means easy to work with, and very dicible.

Poetic: *in which it is taken for granted* that 'true or false?' is not a relevant question at the literal level. What is presented may or may not in fact be a representation of actual reality but the writer takes it for granted that his reader will *experience* what is presented rather in the way he experiences his own memories, and not *use* it like a guidebook or map in his dealings with the world—that is to say, the language is not being used instrumentally as a means of achieving something, but as an end in itself. When Huck Finn said all Tom Sawyer's great stories were lies he was mistaking the function of stories (the poetic function) and operating the 'rules' of the other 'game'—the transactional. So a reader *does* different things with transactional and poetic writings: he uses transactional writing, or any bit of it, for any purpose, but who can say what we 'do' with a story or a poem that we read, or a play we watch? Perhaps we just share it with the writer; and not

having to 'do' anything with it leaves us free to attend to its formal features—which are not explicit—the pattern of events in a narrative, the configuration of an idea and, above all, the pattern of feelings evoked: in attending in this non-instrumental way we experience feelings and values as part of what we are sharing. Writing in the poetic function shows a heightened awareness of symbolic, aural and even visual qualities—of shaping a verbal construct; for instance seven-year-old children begin their stories in the way their experience has taught them—'Once there was a little giraffe . . . '—and they often write 'The End' on a separate line as conclusion. Older children, of course, shape their writing in the poetic function in more sophisticated ways (see the anonymous story in Paper 5, 'Growth from the Expressive'), and we include here a poem by Timothy, aged 12.

The Arabs

Hurtling across the sand
On their white horses
Robes flowing behind
like madmen they charge
Seemingly never to cease
The Horses' hooves pound on the
scorched sand of the desert
Their scimatars flashing in the sun
They mount a dune
Pause
Then they are away
Vanishing into the distant sands.

How the Three Functions Are Related

Our theory, then, describes three functions to be found in our language and goes on to describe the relationship between them. The expressive is basic: its equivalent in speech is the vehicle of the great bulk of communications between mankind. The transactional and the poetic are best seen as developments from the expressive to meet more specialised requirements. For instance, both the expressive and the transactional may convey information, but in the transactional the writer's personal attitude to the

information may be suppressed as being irrelevant to what the reader needs to know. The reader is assumed to want to *use* the information, so in writing to your Insurance Company to tell them you have changed your car, you don't say how attached you were to your old one; writing to your mother you do.

Similarly, both the expressive and the poetic may recount a narrative, but in the transactional this is subservient to some other end–for information, or as an illustration–whereas in the poetic the focus is on the shaping of the tale, on the selection and ordering of the pattern of events and characters and contexts so that the story may stand on its own to be experiences as an end in itself.

3 Genuine Communication

The two models of 'Function' and 'A Sense of Audience' make it possible for us to look at the range of writing which children are doing in all their school work; and it allows us to be quite precise about the development of their ability to write appropriately for different purposes and different audiences.

Development is to a large extent a process of specialisation and differentiation: we start by writing the way we talk to each other–expressively, and envisaging as our reader a single, real, known person; gradually we may acquire, *in addition*, the capacity to use the transactional and the poetic, and to write for an unspecified, generalised or unknown audience. Further this differentiation ideally occurs as a result of coming to hold those adult purposes for which the mature forms of writing have been evolved, and of learning to anticipate the needs of different and remoter audiences. So the development of writing abilities is partly conditional on the more general development of the child out of egocentrism; but that general development may itself be aided by the practice of writing.

Writing (like talk) organises our picture of reality, and, at the same time and by the same process communicates it to someone else. It is true that for educational purposes the first is more relevant than the second: we ask children to write so that they will organise their world picture, not so that we can learn things from them. But it is a fact of life that we can't have one without the other. Language *has* two faces and we are well advised to take account of both. The moral we draw from this is that, if we want writing to be a means of thinking and of active organising, we must make sure that the writer feels he has a genuine communication to make and is not merely performing an exercise—which was how David, aged thirteen, saw it: he said, 'You write it down just to show the teacher that you've done it, but it doesn't bring out any more knowledge in you'.

'Genuine communication' for a child, in whatever context—writing for history, English, science, a letter, a diary—is very often going to mean an inseparable blend of giving an account of the topic and expressing a response to it. If this is so, we should accept the mixture; if we discourage the personal element in it, we risk making writing an unwieldy and alien instrument instead of a natural extension of the child's own mental processes. And accepting it means more than simply allowing it to happen: it means agreeing to be communicated with in that way and making ourselves a real audience to a child by giving an authentic response to the communication as a communication rather than by giving back an evaluation of how well he has accomplished the task.

The child's early writing is necessarily expressive because he has not yet come to differentiate his purposes nor appreciate the differing needs of differing audiences. But the mixture of thinking and feeling, subjective and objective, personal and public, which we find in the child's expressive language is characteristic of our mental processes too—of the way we think and react—and this is so at all stages, and not only when we are young. This would suggest that the expressive ought to continue to be an important vehicle for, say, assimilating new ideas encountered in school, even after the child has learned to use the transactional and the poetic. In that case, the need will probably persist for an audience which is seen as sympathetic and non-evaluative and in whose presence the child feels he can, as it were, talk to himself—think

aloud (see the examples quoted in Paper 1 above). The professional scientist writes in the transactional for publication but may do part of his thinking in expressive letters to friends: we need to provide both social situations for children (and, of course, not only in science).

Many children never come to be at home in the transactional. Too often they perform a sort of empty mimicry of the style of the adult academic writing they have met—in text books and elsewhere—without the transactional ever becoming the natural vehicle for setting out information and ideas for specific purposes. Our theory suggests that we might do better by devising situations in which, for instance, 'informative' writing has a genuine informative function—someone is going to use the information and provide feedback as to its usefulness, making it clear what is and is not relevant to his needs. Children are commonly asked to write down information for a teacher who, they are well aware, knows it better than they do. Often there is the additional fiction that the reader is not the teacher (which he patently is!) but some vaguely perceived public audience. Of course, exposure to adult models of good transactional writing will be important: but children will naturally take from the models at each stage whatever fulfils a felt need; this is a far cry from the docile imitation of style and tone which produces so much lifeless posturing in school writing.

The poetic, too, might be expected to develop readily out of the expressive—and not only in English lessons, if children have been encouraged to use the expressive mode of writing in other subject areas. The desire to shape writing, in which there is a strong personal investment and an increasing awareness of the potential of language as a creative medium, should grow naturally out of lively, involved expressive writing. It is not a question here of informing, or organising or even persuading a given audience, but rather of presenting for them an experience which has been transformed from the anecdotal, rather informal 'chat' level into a construct which can be shared, enjoyed and appreciated by a wider audience.

So what is necessary is for the child to be put into situations which are so constructed that he feels a genuine need to operate

in a particular way. This is explored in greater detail in Paper 4.

4 Single Situations Not Kinds of Writing

A teacher in one of our associated schools wrote to us asking, 'Should children be taught to distinguish between the three types of writing?' (expressive, transactional and poetic).

In our view this would not be helpful—quite the reverse—but we do think that if children understand that what they write needs to be different for different purposes and audiences they could set about writing with more confidence, and confidence is a major element in developing writing.

In real life every writing situation is different; even in the case of a journalist writing for a particular paper with a stable readership, or a secretary of a committee writing reports of meetings—to take two examples where the situations at first sight might appear to repeat themselves—a good writer would in each case be aware of differences in the circumstances from other occasions and would reflect these in his reports. So it would be helpful for children to understand this potential diversity of writing, and our advice would be to *set up situations* for writing with clearly stated purposes and varied audiences, real or imaginary, to work from occasion to occasion and to let a sense of the functions of writing develop through experience of writing for a variety of audiences and purposes. Until children are actually operating writing in different modes (or functions) they can't see the differences; all they will see will be different surface features, such as the convention of not using 'I' in science reports. In practice there is no reason why the first person should not be used, particularly in the early years of learning science, since the

separation of the doer from what he does is a sophisticated mental activity and may prevent assimilation of new knowledge and reflection on it.

But for most children it is not enough just to set up a situation by stating an audience and a purpose. They need to enter into the whole situation, and here we should like to explore a little more fully what 'entering into a whole situation' might mean. Everyone does this without conscious effort in speech. Our relationships and attitude to whoever we are speaking to, and to what we are talking about, and to the total situation (which may cause us to feel shy, confident, relaxed, frightened etc) is reflected in the way we speak on these different occasions because we are part of a real situation: we know who we are talking to, or we know we don't know them and our speech changes accordingly. In school writing the situation is either that it is a task done directly for the teacher, or the children are asked to enter into an imaginary situation, for example, 'Life for me as a peasant', 'A letter from a worker in a tea-garden in Ceylon', or 'An eye-witness account of one of the miracles of Jesus'.

In both these writing situations—the real and the imaginary—we think the teachers of all subjects could help their pupils by discussing with them what a particular piece of writing is for, and who it is for—the teacher? the writer? (with the teacher as an interested background audience) the class? And is the writing to show what the pupil knows? or to explore ideas for himself? or to share his ideas with someone else?

When the situation is an imaginary one, as in the examples quoted above, we think that deliberate steps need to be taken to help the children enter into the whole situation before they write. It is quite a feat of imagination to cast oneself in roles other than one's own, so it often happens that children have a kind of split focus in these situations, and what dominates is the sense that this is only a game and what is really wanted is for them to get into their piece the things they have learned about in the lesson, and this operates against their drawing on their own experience of life to envisage the attitudes, feelings and possible actions that could be part of the imaginary situation. For instance, children could write powerfully about being a peasant because they

themselves are subject to authority in a way adults are not; moreover many of them are small people physically compared to adults. From such a starting link between the imagined character and themselves they can then select from the information of the history lesson to put flesh on the bones of their daily lives as a peasant which they know is different in detail from their own.

If when setting up these imaginary situations teachers could spend a little time in talking with the children about the situation and in getting the children to envisage verbally, or by dramatic improvisation, how these imaginary people might think, feel and act, we think the children would step more completely and confidently into the roles they are being asked to play in times past or places distant. We also think that if all teachers who set written work discussed these kinds of questions with the children—over a period of time—they would be helped to become aware of the diversity of writing that is possible, and would learn to take up the needs of different situations in the way they already do in speech.

The really important thing about writing is to keep one's *main attention* focussed on what one wants to say and on netting this in words. At the same time, however, one's *subsidiary attention* is concerned with the physical task of using a pen to get the words down on the page, and somewhere in the background, out of sight, out of mind most of the time, is the 'reader over one's shoulder' acting like a prompter to bring the mind and pen to rest on appropriate utterances. If one stops to think about the reader, or the words one is using, one's focal attention has momentarily changed places with one's subsidiary attention and one has to scan back in order to get focussed, once again, on whatever it is 'out there' that one is trying to capture in words. So if a child were asked to write, for instance, an 'expressive' piece or a 'transactional' piece, it would shift his attention from *what* he wants to say on to *how* he is to say it, and we think that attention on the *how* should have been focussed earlier by what went on before the writing began (the situation, the talk about it etc).

Being able to envisage an audience, and shape one's utterance to take account of that audience, is part of growing up. Young

children tend to see everything through the filter of their own viewpoint, so discussion of who is actually going to read what they they write, or who they are to imagine will read it, may help children because it reminds them of the speaker-listener situation in speech which they have always known and where they have resources they can draw on.

5 Growth from the Expressive

TRANSACTIONAL ◄ ◄ ◄ EXPRESSIVE ► ► ► POETIC

In Paper 2 we said that expressive speech is the vehicle of the great bulk of communication between mankind. Expressive writing is a similar sort of 'matrix' out of which more specialised and differentiated kinds of writing can grow. In this paper we try to document stages in that growth towards differentiation—to catch on the wing the process of moving towards the greater explicitness of the transactional, or the more conscious shaping of the poetic.

We have chosen three pieces of writing for illustration and comment. The first is by James from St Paul's Secondary School, Bessbrook, Northern Ireland; the second by John, from Chelsea School, London; and the third by a girl who asked to remain anonymous—all aged twelve.

JAMES

James was asked to record his thoughts during a silent 'sit-in'.

> I am thinking that when I go home I wont have to do any sticks and I hope my friend will come out right away. When

> I call up for him he says wait for a moment and he does be an hour. When you go home there is lots of things to do. When you have no work to do you could play a game of football or even a game of tig.

This writing is expressive (as we have defined 'expressive' in Paper 2). It reflects James's thoughts and feelings and attitudes ('When I call up for him he says wait for a moment and he does be an hour'), even his uncertainties about what he is writing. The task he was set gave him little guidance as to what his 'reader' wanted or expected, so he wavers. There is a sign of his moving into a narrative—'he says wait for a moment and he does be an hour'—but immediately he abandons the embryo story—his move towards the poetic—and starts making generalisations about how to fill in time, which take him towards the transactional. The writing reflects the writer's uncertainties. He seems not to have felt the need either to inform his teacher in any detail of his thoughts and feelings (a transaction of communicating information) or to give his thoughts and feelings shape to satisfy himself (a direction towards the poetic).

JOHN

Our second example comes from John, who had been finding out about the area around his school, and on his return wrote this:

> After the war the Germans came over to Britain and built Fulham Gasworks. With it they built a square called the German square. Now it is called Imperial Square. In the Square there are gas lamps and they are still working. They still have gas in them. Some people said that the gasworks might be pulled down. All along Michael Road and Harwood Road the houses are going to be pulled down because they are going to build a flyover. The old lady in no. 9 Imperial Square said that she doesn't care if they are going to knock down the house because she has had her happy days and now she is old and she is no longer wanted. No one loves her. Her house has been standing for a hundred years. All the houses in Imperial Square have been standing up for a long time. The people there complain about the supporters come through Imperial Square and they smash bottles and other

bad things. This lady said that when the Germans were there it was very hard to get a job. You had to get up very early to queue up to get a job in the power station. It must have been very hard for the people. They might have to wait about six hours before the gates open, then they might not still get a job. I would not like to been in those days. I bet their houses were running with rats. They had no food hardly, there clothes were dirty, they were dirty, they had diseases. It must have been terrible for them. I felt sorry for the lady who we was talking to. It must have been hard for her. People from everywhere came to the Gasworks to get a job. Where my friend lives, his name is Leslie, at the end of his street called Elb Street there is a place there, it has gas there, they put it in the lorries. That has been standing for about a hundred years, and Langford School, that was built in 1889. I used to go there and my brothers went there. I like that school. I will remember that school. Lots of old ladies must have memories but if they tell you they might think that we think the things they are saying to us is silly. It is sad for some of the old people. Their husbands have died in the war and now they have no one to talk to. They are all alone but this is life. No one can live for ever. It's very sad. Where I live in Pearscroft Road there is a place called Bulow Court. Before that was built there was a road going through there called Bulow Road. There must be something done about these old people. I don't know what but something.

John had been given a much clearer idea of his task than James. There can be little doubt that he sees his role as informant and he begins firmly in this role, but as he gets under way he shifts from information to speculation and direct expression of his feelings about 'those days' and about the old lady who had informed him. ('It must have been very hard for the people . . . I would not like to been in those days . . . It must have been terrible for them. I felt sorry for the lady who we was talking to').

There are few signs of deliberate structuring. It is written all in one piece and he sees no reason to restrict himself to information—and why should he? His attitudes and feelings are as much a discovery as the locale and its inhabitants. The selection and ordering of his account seems to be determined by his feelings, and, as in all

expressive writing, he takes it for granted that the information he wants to give will be what his reader wants to know.

What marks this piece out as a step towards a differentiated transactional function is the writer's clear conviction that he is presenting real information ('After the war the Germans came over to Britain and built Fulham Gas Works' and so on); it has therefore the stamp of a genuine communication.

A GIRL

The third piece we have selected for comment is no less firmly in the expressive. It is very near speech: it backtracks and slips into 'asides' and digresses to inform the reader about the game they were playing ('Now if you don't know what Hooky is, well I'll tell you it is a game that . . . '); but it also has other features which suggest that the writer had just as clear a sense that she was writing a *story*, albeit a real one, as John had a sense of presenting real information. Furthermore it must be remembered that this writer wished to be anonymous, so, although it was written for her teacher to read as 'first' audience, she must also have had a sense of some subsequent unknown audience in London. Writing for a wider unknown audience is one of the features that distinguishes differentiated writing and causes the writer to shape it more deliberately. In the shaping of her memories this writing is approaching story form.

The Secret

As I tried to hold back my tears of shame a vision of that awful game loomed before me. My mane problem was should I tell my mother or should I not. You see it all began one night when I had a friend staying with me or at least I thought she was a friend. Mum and Dad were out and my friend mentioned playing a game. As she told us about it I was frightened. This is what she told us. One night in the boarding school where she went to they played a game called 'Hooky' Now if you don't know what Hooky is, well I'll tell you it is a game that involves contacting the spirits and asking the spirit questions such as. What age will you get married at, will you do well in your exams, or anything else you wish to ask the spirit. She told us of one time when

the spirit would not leave the room, and the girls had to get a blessed cross to get rid of the spirit. My friend nearly insisted on play-ing the game in our house, although I did not aprove my brother seemed to find no harm in doing so. I said nothing but stayed in the room as the game comenced. My friend thought she had got a spirit so she asked what age would she get married at no reply came so she asked again. The glass on the table moved to the letter B, that was the second letter of the Albhet which meant number two. Then the glass on the table moved to D, that was number four. She was to get married at twenty four. My friend asked my brother to ask it a question, my brother said that he didnt want to and that he didnt want to play anymore. So my friend asked the spirit to go, and to give some sign of when it is going. The spirit rattled the blinds as it left. I was scared stiff. But my friend just laughed. I was not going to tell Mum about it because I knew she would not abrove. The next day I decided to tell mum. I counted to five and then I told her. Mum didnt say much but she told me it was against the Catholic Religion to play this game. That was my secret told and it had lifted a great load from my head. And I went to confession vowing never again. And also not to assoiate very much with my friend again.

The ways in which this writer begins and ends are perhaps the most clearly deliberate and controlled features of her story. She does not plunge into the narrative but begins with a statement of her guilt and her problem–'Should I tell my mother or should I not'. Then follows the train of events which tumble out very much as they might in speech, and they give the impression that they are in control of her rather than she of them. But in the last few sentences she is in control again, and moves firmly into the last sentences of the actual narrative–'I counted five and then I told her. Mum didnt say much but she told me it was against the Catholic Religion to play this game'. The actual story is now ended but she does not end here; she moves into a wider context, just as she began from a wider context, and in her last sentence her language is a long way from speech–'I went to confession vowing never again. And also not to assoiate very much with my friend again'.

Although we may assume this is a true story, the form of all stories, whether true or invented, is shaped by the teller, and we suggest that this piece of writing is in transition towards the poetic.

It could, of course, be argued that her purpose in writing this piece was to inform, and in the sense that all writing implies an act of communication this is true, but her focus on shaping a series of events and emotions into a complete construct suggests that information is not her dominant purpose. As with all stories in the poetic function, hers is to be experienced rather than used.

We have chosen these examples of expressive writing in transition because we believe that differentiation from the matrix of expressive language is the process by which children learn, and also learn to write. We see learning and learning to write as linked, and capable of being more closely associated than they often are in practice. We also believe that the need for expressive language remains wherever there are new experiences to be assimilated and that the expressive is the continuing source from which specialised forms of language can grow.

To Sum Up

WE BELIEVE . . .

- that writing can serve a much wider purpose than it usually gets the opportunity to serve in schools.
- that talk and writing are closely related and that talk can arise out of writing just as writing can arise out of talk.
- that both talk and writing are valuable activities for *all* pupils to engage in at some time.

– that on each occasion there is a decision to be made as to whether talk or writing is more appropriate.

– that it is helpful to teachers in making such decisions for them to be able to see what other teachers have done in similar circumstances.

– that because of the pressures of his own timetable the individual teacher finds it very difficult to see what other teachers have done.

– that for the same reason it is difficult for the teacher to see research findings in the field of pupils' language (written and oral).

– that it would be worthwhile *to set up a network* which would enable teachers to exchange experiences, researchers to indicate research findings, and both to suggest new fields for inquiry.

more specifically:

– that a 'map' of different kinds of writing can be of value to teachers.

– that the map, produced by the Writing Research Unit at the London University Institute of Education, dealing with *'function'* and *'audience'*, could be of particular value to teachers.

– that these ideas, if they are to be valuable, need trying out in schools, where they can be applied, refined and extended.

– that it is desirable that more school writing should be in functions other than generalising or classificatory.

– that it is helpful to the pupil's learning if he gets the opportunity on occasions to choose his own way of handling a topic.

– that it is positively harmful to most pupils' learning if they have always to handle topics in somebody else's way.

– that it is helpful to the pupil's learning if he gets the opportunity to write, on occasions, for audiences other than the teacher.

– that when he does write for the teacher he need not always be expected to see the teacher as examiner or assessor.

– that these last few points have strong implications for the way we set up and the way we receive pupils' written offerings.

– that setting up situations in which children communicate in a motivated way about what they are learning is difficult. It is one of our major tasks to learn how to do it.

Some Relevant Books

Barnes, D., Britton, J. and Rosen, H., *Language, the Learner and the School*, Revised edition, Penguin, 1971

Jones, A. and Mulford, J. (Eds.), *Children Using Language*, O.U.P., 1971

Britton, J., *Language and Learning*, Penguin, 1972

Burgess, C. et al., *Understanding Children Writing*, Penguin, 1973

Rosen, C. and H., *The Language of Primary School Children*, Penguin, 1973

Printed by the Falling Wall Press Ltd., 79 Richmond Rd., Montpelier, Bristol BS6 5EP